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SIMPLIFYING THE SELECTION OF A CAREER

BY C. H. MURRAY, *Director of Employment The American Rolling Mill Co.*

AS a result of a great deal of study and observation over a period of years, it is apparent to me that positive results are coming to be accomplished in the solution of the college graduate's seemingly difficult problem of choosing a career. We are confident it has been definitely determined that a following out of certain specific considerations will materially aid the young man who after four or more years of intensive training such as is now offered in the major schools of the country, stands on the threshold of his life's work. We use the terms "career" and "life's work" advisedly because of the fact that we feel in most cases the college graduate has fairly well established along what particular direction he wishes to exert his energies and his major problem remains in the selection of the particular organization in which he is to give those energies play. On the other hand, we recognize that there are a large number of young men who have little idea of the line of work in which they can be most effective, and here again the choosing of a company in which they may properly "find" themselves is most important.

A few years ago, except in isolated cases, there was apparently no scientific method in any young man's mind as to how such a problem could be approached. As a result, the man as well as industry lost a great deal of time in getting to the place where a proper contribution could be made and rewarded. With the recent growth of an increasingly close relationship between educational institutions and industry, however, the program begins to take definite shape and it is our belief that in later years the average student will attack this problem of choosing the company with which he wishes to become affiliated in much the same manner as he does any laboratory test: first setting up his problem, then getting together all facts necessary to its solution, and finally tying them together and arriving at a logical conclusion.

Technical skill of every class must be employed in successfully carrying out the varied programs of the larger industries as they function today and in them are found positions of major responsibility which should be attractive to the college man. It is thus that men trained in any of the engineering fields, as well as in other lines, find full play for their efforts and ideas in a single organization and it is not uncommon to see the mechanical, civil, electrical, chemical, mining and metallurgical engineer; the trained salesman, accountant, publicity man, and social service worker carrying out under the same roof important phases of a large company's undertakings.

Assuming, again, that by specializing in his college work and supplementing this technical training by practical experience during the vacation periods, a man has prepared himself for a specific line of work, we are led to the place where the problem of what particular company is best adapted to the effective outlet of an individual's capabilities is paramount. There are hundreds of well managed industrial organizations established in this country today and the "measuring stick" which we are presenting is sufficiently elastic to apply to any.

First, there are certain general considerations which are most obvious, such as realizing that the problem cannot be worked out overnight and that often a few years of actual observation on a job or various jobs may be necessary before a decision can be arrived at, that of dodging the soft spots which may prove to be "dead

ends" a disregard for initial monetary return when balanced against experience and future possibilities, and a number of other factors which are important, but with which we are not concerned here. It is the specific considerations in which we are now most interested. Our experience has shown that those set forth below should be most carefully regarded.

1. Study the character of the personnel and management of a company. Personnel and management of an organization must be studied together as the two are so closely related that one cannot be effective without the other. A far-visioned and understanding management is sure to build up a contented and "producing" personnel and if any of these factors are lacking the company is not one in which the ambitious technically trained man can effectively cash in on his capacity.

2. Is it a basic industry; *i. e.*, one of the fundamental industries on which all other lines of work depend? This is important to insure the steadiest growth of a man's career. There are many non-basic industries which are successful and operate with little interruption, yet there is surety that a basic industry will carry out these factors to a greater degree.

3. How big is it? Although a rise to the top is usually easier in a small organization than it is in a large one, because of the fact that competition is less keen, the ultimate gain will not nearly approach the position which is in reach of men in the larger organization.

4. What has been its history in expansion and labor relations—has it been a follower or a leader? It is comparatively simple to study the history of our larger organizations and it is important because as an organization has functioned in the past, so will it function in the future, provided, of course, that its management and personnel remain practically the same.

5. What is the breadth of its market? A company whose market is wide in scope is naturally wide in the opportunities which it can give the individual members of its organization and offers an outlet for the functioning of many different forms of effort.

6. Is the product diversified? A business whose distribution depends upon the economic situation of one particular group is apt to offer unstable and interrupted employment to the members of its group.

7. How is the company generally regarded by its own personnel, competitors and persons in other lines of work? The method of getting the answer to this question and the conclusions to be drawn from the answers are obvious.

8. What is its financial standing? Anyone has access to the balance sheets of the larger industrial concerns. It is well to study them closely in order that one can be sure he is identifying himself with a going concern.

9. Study the general appearance and layout of plants and offices. Just as the dress and carriage of an individual show something of his personal habits, so does the outward appearance of an industrial organization reflect its methods of management.

10. Have other men made progress? Where other men with similar qualifications have made progress, it is natural to assume that the new man will move upward in a like degree. An organization loaded with potential

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which fills its important positions from within its own organization may be counted upon to offer regular progress, that which hires its executives from outside its own doors has usually a discontented and constantly shifting personnel farther down the line.

13. Are there many organization changes made? Regular changes in organization due to expansion in a company's size and scope are healthy. Those which are caused by a constant shift in supervisory positions would point out that there is a lack of pulling together and that even when gained, a responsible place in that organization is insecure and, therefore, not to be especially sought after.

14. What are the facilities for training? Every right-minded technically trained man, realizes that additional and constant study is necessary to his future advancement. A company which offers under its own supervision a variety of courses with which a young man may supplement his college training gives him the advantage of those necessary studies which if gotten on the man's own initiative might be expensive as well as misdirected.

15. What outside activities does the company sponsor? Interest in civic affairs, the furnishing of recreation places where the members of its organization may meet together, the support of athletic teams; in short, the promotion of a general plan for an outlet for its individuals' "play" energies, and the moulding of good citizenship is a very close indication of what may be expected from that company along other lines.

16. What are the opportunities for investment into the company? When one has confidence in the future of the organization with which he is affiliated he is often moved to divert all his available financial as well as his physical efforts into that company for his own well being. A company which offers an easy method of purchase of its securities is setting up the opportunity for an investment against the future in the same measure as it does in offering advancement on the job.

As mentioned previously, the above considerations have purposely been made elastic so that they would fit any number of good companies in various lines of endeavor. There are, undoubtedly, other individual considerations which a man must consider before allying himself with one particular organization, but these will depend very largely on local conditions and must be met and handled as they occur.

The important thing is the recognition of the fact that these factors represent a very vital part of a young man's entry into the business world and that a closer study of the problem along scientific lines is becoming a greater necessity from day to day. We feel that it is

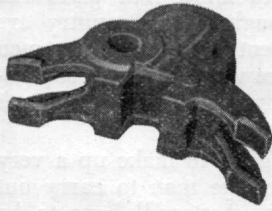
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leaders who have stood still for a number of years is one to avoid.

11. Are there many young men in executive positions? This consideration is directly in comparison to that mentioned above. An organization which gives full play to the ambitions and ideas of the younger members of its personnel should attract those young men who are seeking places of responsibility.

12. What is the policy of promotion? A company



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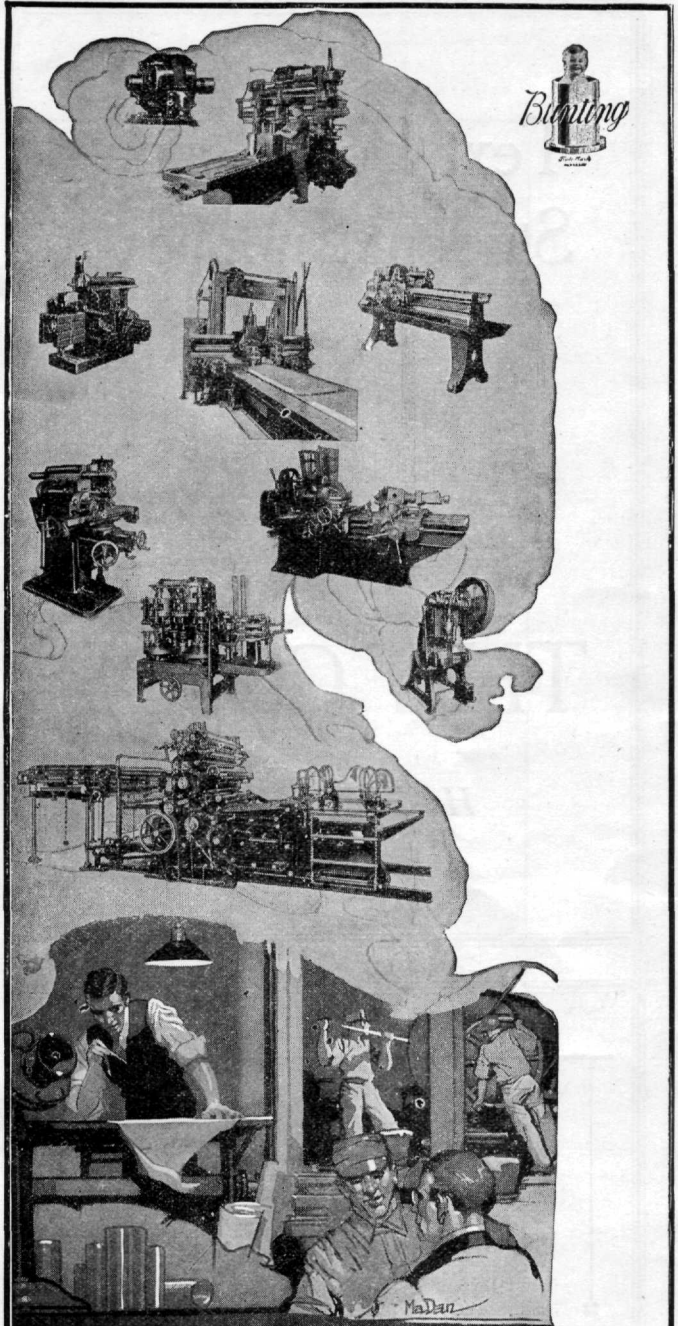
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well for the college graduate to know that personnel departments of companies throughout the country are as anxious to see proper placement made as are the men themselves and that in most cases wholehearted cooperation can be gained from this source in working out such a plan as has been put forth here.

The above mentioned factors seem to make up a very complicated program for the college man to carry out and it is true that considerable effort will have to be expended in order to arrive at a successful conclusion. Yet the plan is far from being unworkable, especially if the man begins its study early in his college career. We believe, further, that the time is not far distant when the necessity of such a program will be so universally recognized that courses in "vocational guidance" will be a regular part of our college curricula.

This discussion of the college graduate's relation to industry is an important, but nevertheless only one single phase, of the whole subject. There are certain preparatory steps necessary as well as a great many things to be done after he has been placed on the job, but these factors could not be discussed in detail except in a very complete volume.
